



**DELHI UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARY**

**THE GIFT  
THE FORD FOUNDATION**





SUPPLEMENT TO  
THE  
CHRISTMAS  
WINDSOR

REMINISCENCES

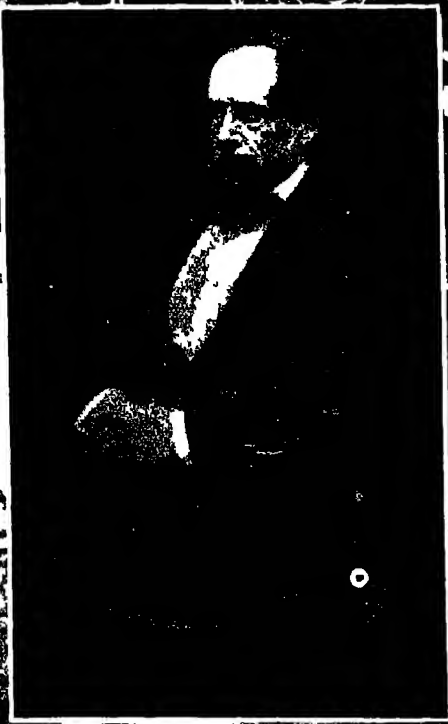
OF MY FATHER

CHARLES DICKENS

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY THE AUTHOR

AND A PREFACE



A NEW LITERARY DISCOVERY

**HASKELL HOUSE PUBLISHERS LTD**

*Publishers of Scarce Scholarly Books*

280 LAFAYETTE STREET

NEW YORK N Y 10012

**Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data**

Dickens, Charles, 1837-1896.  
Reminiscences of my father.

"Supplement to the Christmas Windsor."

Reprint of an edition (1934?) published by Ward,  
Lock & Co., London.

1. Dickens, Charles, 1812-1870. I Title.  
PR4581.D43 1973 823' 8 [B] 72-6292  
ISBN 0-8383-1626-3



CHARLES DICKENS THE YOUNGER

From the original pastel by George Richmond, R A , painted in 1852, when the subject was  
15 years of age    Reproduced by permission of Miss Ethel Dickens

# FOREWORD

BY MARY ANGELA DICKENS,  
THE NOVELIST'S GRAND-DAUGHTER

"REMEMBER who you are, of what father born." These words—in the Latin—are the inscription in a prize won by my father at Eton. It was an obvious inscription. But it was superfluous. Long before he left Eton I think that Charles Dickens the Younger—so styled in the codicil to my grandfather's will—was developing what was later to become the dominant feature in his character, his devoted admiration of his father.

The eldest child of Charles Dickens, he was born in 1837. *Pickwick* was just published. The impressionable years of childhood were passed in the extraordinary atmosphere of vitality and success which seems to have surrounded the meteoric rise into fame of one of the most exuberant of Victorian men of genius. To the child growing into boyhood—eager, enthusiastic, impressionable—what could this wonderful young father be other than a hero!

There are many well-pleased references to "Charley" in his father's letters during his years at Eton, beginning with a distinctly "proud father" account of the way in which the boy acquitted himself on his entrance examination, and including a delightful description of the report of a manservant who had seen the boy off at the station and described "about forty young gentlemen as was his friends" all "with their heads out of the coach windows a-hallooing 'Dickens' all over the station."

At fifteen he was taken from Eton and sent to Leipzig. John Foster, in his *Life*, says that "the boy's wishes at this time pointed to a mercantile career." Personally, I find it impossible to believe that my father ever had an inclination towards a business life, though he eventually made

a virtue of necessity. I have reason to believe that he thought his father's wishes for him pointed in that direction. He enjoyed his years in Germany thoroughly, and he evidently also applied himself to work, since his father mentions him in various letters about 1856 as entering the firm of Barings with "so high a character for ability and zeal," of his "doing very well at Barings and attracting praise and reward to himself," and so forth.

Four years later he went to China in preparation for starting his own business in London. In 1861 he married. It was a family joke—and also a fact—that he and my mother were engaged when he was seven years old! They were lovers all their lives.

Success did not, I fancy, attend my father's early business enterprises, and his natural bent towards a literary life made itself increasingly apparent. In 1868 his father wrote to him, "Your paper is remarkably good. There is no doubt that you can write regularly for *A.Y.R.* I am very pleased with it."

A year later my father became his father's private secretary and sub-editor of *All the Year Round*. It is clear that, now that the influence which had stood between them from his boyhood was no longer all-dominating, a closer intimacy between father and son was developing. I suppose that nothing in his life gave my father more satisfaction than this.

But the time was short. There were moments in his later life when my father would live again for us the last hours of June 9th, 1870, when my grandfather died, and almost make us live them. He bought Gad's Hill, and it was our home for some years. We never dined in the dining-room on the anniversary of that evening, but in the garden, if possible. And

syringa was forbidden in the house, because it was associated in his mind with the long hour he had spent sitting on the conservatory steps with his younger sister in the summer twilight, the air heavy with its scent, and in the room beyond, their father lying dead.

All *The Year Round* was left to my father, and he threw himself into the congenial work of carrying on its traditions. The most popular novelists of the time supplied the serials, two of Miss Braddon's best books appeared in it. For twenty years it maintained a high level, and with it he ran another weekly of a slightly different type which he called by the old name of *Household Words*.

But journalistic literature, in those days, could not be relied upon to bring in a large income. My father had eight children, and he turned again to business. He joined his brother-in-law, Frederick Evans, in a printing business which was carried on with varying fortunes until 1893, when it was finally wound up.

Looking back, in the light of my father's *Reminiscences*, to my own childhood at Gad's Hill, I am struck by the unconscious reflection in my father's life there of his own father's doings. There was no touch of imitation. He was totally incapable of any sort of pose. It was simply that his personal devotion to his father carried him instinctively along similar lines under similar external conditions. In my childish memory, as in his, there is a toy theatre which did not come into my hands because my father and his friends found it so enthralling. I, also, remember a constant succession of visitors, the drawing-room games played with immense earnestness, even a dinner party at which my childish presence had to efface the fatal number thirteen. The summer game in those days was croquet, and my father played it with a deadly concentration and enthusiasm which my grandfather could hardly have surpassed.

He was a lover of cricket and our field was always at the service of the village club. In this connection I quote a letter from Sir Frederick Macmillan, a much younger man, and now our oldest friend. I used to be told that my father was one of the best after-dinner speakers of his day, and I asked Sir Frederick if he remembered this. He answered "I had a very great regard for your father, who

was a delightful companion. I don't think I ever heard him as an after-dinner speaker, but I have little doubt that he shone in that capacity, for he was a fluent speaker and had a ready wit. I remember, when I was staying at Gad's Hill, being present at a dinner of the village cricket club when he presided with *éclat*." I think this may have been one of the episodes to which the *Reminiscences* allude. On the whole, however, it was as a stage-manager, later on, in the 'eighties, that he reflected his father most closely. Amateur theatricals were then the fashion, we were all enthusiasts, and he became the life and soul of what I think was a very good amateur company. He absolutely revelled in the work. Nothing was left to chance. His interleaved prompt books are models of painstaking detail. Lists of properties and instructions for the call-boy were all made out by his own hand—everything which could ensure the smooth and "professional" running of the performance received his personal and earnest attention.

My father's love of the stage comes to my mind first in connection with Gad's Hill. Among the guests there I remember most vividly Henry Irving—a young man, then, round whom controversy raged. Was he a mountebank—a man who "couldn't walk and couldn't talk"? Or was he the greatest genius the English stage had seen? My father was in the forefront of those who held the latter opinion. Irving's personality fascinated him, his art far outweighed his mannerisms in my father's sound critical judgment. He hailed the first night of his *Hamlet* as marking an epoch in stage history. For many years my father was a regular "first-nighter" at all the London theatres, and I have seldom known his verdict falsified by results.

In the 'eighties, when we lived in London, he was much concerned in the founding—or the reconstruction—of the Green Room Club. Its welfare was for years one of his chief interests, its members his chief friends. He was essentially a good club man and he was at heart a Bohemian. He had no taste whatever for Society life. He simply found it dull. And he did not understand the modern type of actor. He had a strong predilection for the unfortunate—those who would now be called "down



and out " I remember, all my life through, men who were practically free of our house because they had nowhere else to go men to whom he lent money, gave work gave encouragement It did not matter that from the first he was ill repaid He always hoped for something better next time

He had innumerable friends among literary men And if he could have satisfied his own high standard for his father's son he would himself have written more than he did It must have been about the year 1880 that he conceived an idea which developed as *A Dictionary of London* It was a handbook describing all the usual and many of the unusual sights of London, with strict accuracy, but through the medium of his own imaginative and cultivated mind It was an original idea worked out with characteristic thoroughness It made fascinating reading for non-sightseers and sightseers alike And its success was such that a *Dictionary of the Thames* followed No one knew and loved the Thames better than he In 1882 these publications were taken over by the Macmillan Company, and a *Dictionary of Paris and Continental A B C Railway Guide* followed All these were in demand for nearly ten years, when presumably they were superseded, and were given up From the Macmillan Company also, in the 'nineties, came a suggestion that he should write prefaces to the edition of Dickens's books which they were to publish—a suggestion which appealed to him as no other could have done This edition, with his prefaces, had a great success and is still in demand I suppose that nothing else which my father wrote remains It would please him that he should survive as a writer only in connection with his father

I think it was R C Carton, the playwright who suggested the idea of "Dickens Readings" to my father He was reluctant and yet fascinated, and finally the fascination gripped him But when a reading on his personal recollections of his father was suggested he emphatically declined He capitulated only after a struggle, and the *Reminiscences*, so human and so living to the speaker, were very popular Their charm undoubtedly lies in their straightforward simplicity There is no striving after

effect, no "touching up" Everything which he says he remembers, he undoubtedly did remember exactly as he states it Consequently it cost him much to speak in public of memories so sacred to him and he substituted something else whenever he could I do not know why we never thought of publishing the *Reminiscences* It is solely due to the initiative of the Editor of *THE WINDSOR* that they are now presented to the public The story is curious We had no idea that the series of my father's reading books was not intact in our possession until we were courteously made aware from *THE WINDSOR* office that the *Reminiscences* had been offered for publication We then discovered that the book was missing—and fortunately also discovered, to our surprise, a duplicate tucked away in obscurity Oddly enough, not even my sister Ethel, in whose office it was copied, can recollect why my father had it made From this copy the *Reminiscences*, to which this is a Foreword, are printed The first series of readings, including the *Reminiscences*, was so successful that an American tour was arranged My father went to the States in 1887 and met with considerable success

It was in the winter of 1893 that his health showed signs of breaking For two years it fluctuated, and then, in the early spring of 1896, he became very seriously ill On July 20th Charles Dickens the Younger died

I have never thought it a small thing to be the granddaughter of a man whose name is known wherever the English language is spoken I should not be my father's daughter if I were not proud of my name But if, even to-day, my grandfather is to me someone apart from the ordinary run of men, it is because I see him still through my father's eyes Ingrained in my father's character was an instinct for silence about which there was a great dignity He spoke least of what he felt most His immense pride in his father was a pride of which the very essence was reserve My grandfather will live for me always as he was first made known to me, so many years ago, mirrored, in all unconsciousness, in the devoted love and admiration of his eldest son

November, 1934

MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

# PERSONAL REMINISCENCES of MY FATHER

*By*  
**CHARLES DICKENS,**  
*THE ELDEST SON OF THE GREAT NOVELIST*

I DO not propose, Ladies and Gentlemen, to deliver to you tonight a serious lecture upon my father's life from its public point of view, I have no analytical criticism of his works to offer you, nor am I going to tell you, with or without lime-light pictures that his books are Household words, and that his characters are as real to you as if they were members of the circles in which you all live. This much I tell you at once, in order that I may earn your gratitude to start with. For I am sure that you have heard all these things from so many lecturers before, that you will be even anxious to express your thanks in advance to any occupant of this platform who promises to refrain from going over all the old ground once more.

All that I propose

to do is to have a little chat with you about such random recollections of my father, in his habit as he lived among us at home, as have occurred to me while I have been jotting down the material for the filling of that hour and a half of your time which I will ask you to

spare me this evening, and to give you, with a due respect for that privacy of the private life of a public man which is, unhappily, too little respected by too many writers and speakers nowadays, some few and, I hope, not uninteresting details from my personal recollections of my father's life during a period of some three and thirty years.

It is as well, I suppose, to begin all things at the beginning, but, in truth, in the present case I am rather doubtful where the beginning really is,



CHARLES DICKENS THE YOUNGER,  
in middle life

and I am not at all sure that my first recollection of my father is not more derived from tradition than from actual memory. Indeed, as I had at the time attained the ripe age of two or thereabouts, I suppose it must have been so. But I seem to remember very well one Christmas Day dinner at Doughty Street, when, owing to the non-appearance of one of the guests, the party consisted of thirteen, and I was brought down from the nursery to fill the gap, and afterwards set on a footstool on the table at dessert time. It was one of his few superstitions, by the bye, this thirteen at table. Many years afterwards, I remember, at Gadshill we were one day a party of thirteen, and I was relegated to a side-table—greatly to the grief of that kindest-hearted of men, the late Charles Reade, who showed his concern at my isolated position by proposing to take wine with me so often, that I really became almost afraid of the possible consequences.

But I suppose that my first real recollections of my father date from three or four years after this time when we were living in Devonshire Terrace, and just after his return from the first visit to America—on which latter occasion, by the bye, I distinguished myself in a most brilliant manner by being frightened into some sort of fit or convulsion on the unexpected appearance of my parents at my bedside. And my first really clear recollection of him is in connection with a certain American rocking-chair, which I presume he had brought back with him from the States, and in which he often used to sit of an evening, singing comic songs to a wondering and delighted audience consisting of myself and my two sisters. The *Loving Ballad of Lord Bateman*, in the composition of which my father, and Thackeray, and George Cruikshank, were all supposed to have had some sort of hand, was one of these ditties, and used to be sung with a prodigious dramatic effect, and although it was considered to be in some way George Cruikshank's patent, I never could see so much in his version as my father made of it—although, in the days before the great George took to teetotalism and to flinging an infinite quantity of cold water over everything, there was, no doubt, a good deal of humorous extravagance about his declamation of the story of this noble Lord

of high degree, who shipped himself all aboard of a ship some foreign countries for to see. Another very favourite song of ours—and I think my father enjoyed them all even more than we did—was one that was concerned with the history of Guy Fawkes—"Guy Fawkes, that prince of sinisters, who once blew up the House of Lords, the King, and all his ministers." The beginning of each verse contained some startling statement of this kind, which was afterwards modified and explained away in what we considered a most artful and humorous manner. I forget exactly what happened to interfere with the final stage of Guy Fawkes's nefarious project, but in another verse it was stated that Guy "crossing over Vauxhall Bridge that way came into London. That is he would have come that way to perpetrate his guilt, sir, But a little thing prevented him, the bridge it wasn't built, sir," and also that when they wanted to arrest him "they straightway sent to Bow Street for that brave old runner Townshend. That is they would have sent for him, for fear he was no starter at, But Townshend wasn't living then, he wasn't born till arter that." To each verse there was a chorus of the good old-fashioned sort with an "oh, ah, oh, ri fol de riddy oddy bow wow wow" refrain, and a great part of the point of the joke lay in the delivery of the introductory monosyllables, the first, "oh", being given as it were with incredulity or a tone of enquiry, the second, "ah", strongly affirmatively, and the last "oh" with an air as of one who has found conviction, not without difficulty. Some of Tom Moore's melodies also formed part of the repertoire, and there were no doubt others which I have forgotten, but the impression of the singer as he sat in that rocking-chair with us three children about him or on his knees, has never in the least faded from my mind, though of his appearance at some other and later times the picture may be less vivid.

The only really satisfactory portrait of him that ever was painted—with the single exception, perhaps, of Mr C R Leslie's picture of Captain Bobadil—I mean that by *Machse* which was published as the frontispiece to *Nicholas Nickleby*, gives a very good idea of his appearance in these years and for some time later, although it was impossible for the painter

quite to catch the brightness and alertness of look and manner which distinguished his sitter in so remarkable a degree. Later, the beard and moustache concealed that wonderfully expressive mouth, but in these days of which I am speaking, the face was clean-shaven, and the firm and yet mobile lips, as well as the keen and vivid light in those eloquent eyes, assisted in conveying the ever-changing expres-

conspicuous as the force and power, in the face of the Charles Dickens of those days. And it was a trying sort of costume that in which men arrayed themselves in the early forties. High shouldered coats with great rolling collars, tight sleeves with the wristbands of the shirt generally turned up over the cuffs—you will remember that Mr Toots at Dr Blumber's breaking-up party never could quite



CHARLES DICKENS IN 1839

Reproduced by permission from the painting by Daniel Maclise, R A, owned by the late Sir Henry Fielding Dickens.

sion, grave or gay, humorous or pathetic, which were reflected in that singularly handsome face. Those who only knew him in his later days, when the strong lines and deep furrows, the grizzled beard and moustache, made him look older than he really was, and sometimes conveyed to those who did not know him intimately an exaggerated idea of sternness and severity, can have no idea of the delicacy and refinement which were almost as

satisfy himself as to whether it was judicious to wear his wristbands turned up or turned down—high, stiff, stocks, tight round the neck, tumbling in cataracts of satin over the shirt front, and displaying by way of ornament a couple of gold pins attached to each other by a chain, sometimes a sort of apology for a shirt collar, sometimes not even that, high waistcoats with collars to match the coat, and two or three under-waistcoats of various

brilliant colours just showing themselves at the top, nether garments of most uncomfortable looking cut tightly strapped over the boot, long gold watch chains encircling the neck and meandering over the waistcoat, an extravagant profusion of jewellery—Mr Toots on the occasion to which I have already referred was "one blaze of jewellery and buttons"—all this took a good deal of "carrying off" Added to this remarkable costume very long and generally untidy-looking hair—what Mr Pecksniff described as "clustering masses of rich hair"—and you get some notion of the handicap to which the handsomest men of those times submitted in the way of dress The two most striking figures of my childhood and early boyhood, besides my father, were Harrison Ainsworth, and Alfred, Count D'Orsay, and this is my recollection of the costume of all three of them D'Orsay, of course, was a prodigious swell, and led the fashion in those days but the two authors had

also a pretty taste in dress and there is indeed, a portrait of Ainsworth—used, if I remember rightly, as the frontispiece of one of his books—which is even more remarkable than those of D'Orsay himself Mr N P Willis and some other fastidious American critics of that period were, or professed to be, very angry with my father's exaggerated style of dress, as they called it, and were quite shocked, or said they were, by the bright colours in which he was sometimes wont to indulge But, if they had only known it, his dress, which it must be confessed was apt to be somewhat florid in style on occasion, was very much the same as that of the young bucks of his time, while it was simply part of his nature to take delight in bright colours, from the days of rainbow-tinted under-waistcoats to the later time when the gardens at Gadshill displayed their brilliant masses of scarlet geraniums I do, indeed, remember, somewhere about 1857, a certain dress

coat with scarlet silk lining—but the public opinion of the younger generation proved too much for that, and the first appearance of that coat, in that state, was, I think its last

My first experience, I think, of my father's extraordinary energy and of the thoroughness—the even alarming thoroughness—with which he always threw himself into everything he had occasion to take up, was in connection with a toy theatre of which I was the proud possessor somewhere about the middle of the forties Toy theatres with scenery and sheets of the characters only requiring painting and cutting out—one Skelt was the principal artist for such things—were very popular indeed in my very early youth, and it was the aim of every self-respecting boy to be the Augustus Harris of one or more of them



DICKENS READING TO HIS DAUGHTERS, KATIE AND MAMIE, ON THE LAWN AT GADSHILL (1862)

Greater even than the pleasures of the ultimate performances and the accompanying delights of setting out the evil-smelling little footlights which lavished their oil over everything with which it was most desirable they should not come in contact, were the preparations—the painting the scenery, the painting and cutting out the characters, the pasting, the gumming, the thousand and one messes, and snippings, and general causes of litter and untidiness, which were so dear to the boys of my time Skelt, I am afraid, has long since vanished, and toy theatres are so seldom to be seen that I suppose the taste for them has gone out too. Perhaps the boys of to-day know too much about the real theatre to care very much about the toy one, and are not so ready to make-believe as we were. But in my time a toy theatre was about the most popular present you could give a boy, and when some philanthropist made me the proud possessor of an unusually fine specimen, a perfect Drury Lane among its brethren, I anticipated an endless round of delights. But the size of my theatre fascinated my father and, in conjunction with Clarkson Stanfield, who had been distinguished as a scene-painter before he became a member of the Royal Academy, he set to work to produce the first piece. This, I remember, was a spectacle called the "Elephant of Siam," and its production on a proper scale of splendour necessitated the designing and painting of several new scenes, which resulted in such a competition between my father and Stanfield that you would have thought their very existence depended on the mounting of this same elephant. And even after Stanfield had had enough of it my father was still hard at work, and



DICKENS GIVING A PUBLIC READING IN  
ST MARTIN'S HALL

*From a photograph by Herbert Watkins*

pegged away at the landscapes and architecture of Siam with an amount of energy which in any other man would have been something prodigious, but which I soon learned to look upon as quite natural in him. This particular form of dramatic fever wore itself out after the piece was produced, I remember, and the theatre—much to my delight, for I had hitherto had but little to do with it—found its way to the nursery, where in process of time a too realistic performance of the Miller and his Men, comprising an injudicious expenditure of gun-powder and red fire, brought about the fate which finishes the career of most theatres—and very nearly set fire to the house as well.

But this extraordinary, eager, restless energy, which first showed itself to me in this small matter, was never absent from my father all through his life. What-

ever he did he put his whole heart into, and did as well as ever he could. Whether it was for work or for play, he was always in earnest. Painting the scenes for a toy theatre, dancing Sir Roger de Coverley at a children's party, gravely learning the polka from his little daughters for a similar entertainment, walking, riding, picnicking, amateur acting, public reading or the every-day hard work of his literary life, it was all one to him. Whatever lay nearest to his hand at the moment had to be done thoroughly. Mr Forster says of him, as early as the summer of 1839, speaking of the recreations which were indulged in in the garden of the house at Petersham in which he was then living "Bar-leaping, bowling, and quoits were among the games carried on with the greatest ardour, and in sustained energy or what is called keeping it up, Dickens certainly distanced every competitor. Even the lighter recreations of battledore and bagatelle were pursued with relentless activity, and at such amusements as the Petersham races, in those days rather celebrated, and which he visited daily while they lasted, he worked much harder himself than the running horses did."

Speaking through the mouth of David Copperfield, my father described his own way of life with perfect accuracy when he said "I never could have done what I have done without the habits of punctuality, order, and diligence, without the determination to concentrate myself on one object at a time, no matter how quickly its successor should come upon its heels. Heaven knows I write this in no spirit of self-laudation. My meaning simply is that whatever I have tried to do in life, I have tried with all my heart to do well, that whatever I have devoted myself to, I have devoted myself to completely, that in great aims and in small, I have always been thoroughly in earnest. Never to put one hand to anything on which I could throw my whole self, and never to affect depreciation of my work, whatever it was, I find, now to have been my golden rules." In a more homely way the same truth is insisted upon by Mr and Mrs Bayham Badger in "Bleak House." "It was a maxim of Captain Swosser's," said Mrs Badger, "speaking in his figurative naval manner, that when you make pitch hot you cannot make it too hot, and that, if you only have to

swab a plank, you should swab it as if Davy Jones were after you. It appears to me that this maxim is applicable to the medical as well as to the nautical profession." "To all professions," observed Mr Badger. "It was admirably said by Captain Swosser. Beautifully said."

And so it was. But, unfortunately, there comes a time, at last, when these maxims can be carried out too thoroughly, when never-ceasing activity and energy of the kind really deserve Mr Forster's epithet "relentless", and when it becomes of the last importance, for physical as well as mental reasons, to remember that even a virtue, carried to an unreasonable excess, may become something very like a vice. In my father's case, as you have no doubt all heard, and as I shall presently show you, it would have been better if he had been content—or, perhaps, I should say if he could, have been able—to relax the constant strain, the incessant tension, when the physical and nervous strength were no longer so fit to bear them as they once had been. But he never could be persuaded that that time had come for him, and never would admit in his later days that things were no longer with him as they had been of old.

At the time of which I am now speaking the first of my father's numerous sojourns on the Continent began, and we all started off one morning from Paris on our way south in that wonderful travelling carriage which is so graphically described in the Pictures from Italy. I can remember many walks with my father up apparently interminable hills in the lonely French country districts, many queer dirty little towns, the shabby sights of which had to be explored as if they were really quite well worth seeing, many cheery meals and snacks produced, as by the conjuror's art, from the innumerable pockets of the carriage, many wild roadside inns where, in some mysterious way peculiar to himself, my father, aided and abetted by the excellent courier who was in charge of the caravan, evolved order out of chaos, comfort out of squalor, and cheery, kindly attention out of the original sulky apathy. Of my father at Albaro and afterwards at Genoa in 1844 and 1845 I have, strange to say, but a dim recollection, though I have many

vivid reminiscences of the vineyards of the "Pink Jail," as he called the house at Albaro, and of the fine terraced gardens of the Palazzo Peschiere in the beautiful city itself. But as he was, when free from pressure of work, frequently away travelling about the country—rushing over to London to read the Chimes to a party of friends in Mr Forster's rooms, or what not—perhaps the circumstance is not surprising after all. And of our journey homeward over the St Gothard

half-frozen little torrent, which had to be crossed by the insecurest possible arrangement of stepping stones before the road and the carriage could be regained. Why, of all the beautiful mountain pictures which that journey must have presented to me, I should only remember this particular one, is one of those strange freaks of memory which we all know so well.

Shortly after our return home I had my first experience of my father as an actor, and although I have little or no recol-



DICKENS AS "BOBADIL" IN BEN JONSON'S EVERY MAN IN HIS HUMOUR"

*From a painting by C R Leslie, R A*

Pass, all I distinctly remember is an extremely rocky and icy walk, from one point of the steep winding road to another, by way of a short cut. Indeed, I can see the pair of us now, he stalking away in the distance, I struggling in vain to keep up, very tired but extremely proud of being with him—bound to go on whether I liked it or not, not only from the point of honour but because there was nowhere else to go to, and finally very nearly collapsing when the phantom path we had been following was found to disappear over a

lection of the play itself—it was Ben Jonson's 'Every Man in His Humour'—except that I have a strong impression that I found it—on the whole, extremely dull—the humorous swagger and noble exaggeration of his Captain Bobadil are still quite fresh in my memory, and it does not require the aid of Mr Leslie's portrait of him in the part—to which I have already referred as being one of the only two really good portraits of him—to bring the Captain very distinctly before my mind's eye. I shall have to recur



several times before I conclude to my father as an actor—both on the boards and on the platform—but I may say now that, if ever a man seemed to have been born for one particular pursuit, it was my father in connection with the stage. He was, indeed, a born actor, and no line of character that I ever saw him essay came amiss to him. From Captain Bobadil to Justice Shallow, from old-fashioned farce such as "Two O'clock in the Morning" and "Animal Magnetism" to the liveliest Charles Mathewsisms, and thence again to the intensest Frederic Lemaître melodrama, from the tremendous power of the Sikes and Nancy Reading to the absurdities of Serjeant Buzfuz, from the pathos of Little Dombey to the broad humours of Mrs Gamp, everything seemed to come natural to him. That he brought to his acting the same earnestness and energy that he gave to everything else is of course true, but no amount of work could have produced the same result if the power had not been there, strongly, unusually strongly, developed. There was a quaint professional touch, and yet one easy to understand, about the remark which a stage-carpenter once made to him, during the progress of some amateur performance at the Haymarket Theatre, "Ah, Mr Dickens, it was a sad loss to the public when you took to writing."

And, besides his powers as an actor, he had a positive genius for stage management. "Greatly as his acting contributed to the success of the night, this was nothing to the service he had rendered as Manager," says Mr Forster, speaking of the "Every Man in His Humour" performance. "It would be difficult to describe it. He was the life and soul of the entire affair. I never seemed till then to have known his business capabilities. He took everything on himself, and did the whole of it without an effort. He was stage-director, very often stage-carpenter, scene-arranger, property man, prompter, and band master. Without offending any one, he kept every one in order. He adjusted scenes, assisted carpenters, invented costumes, devised play-bills, wrote out calls, and enforced, as well as exhibited in his proper person, everything of which he urged the necessity on others.

Such a chaos of dirt, confusion, and noise as the little theatre was the day we

entered it, and such a cosmos as he made of it of cleanliness, order, and silence, before the rehearsals were over!" It was the Theatre Royal, Devonshire Terrace, and the Elephant of Siam, over again on a larger scale, and we were all to have more practical experience of it by and bye, when we came to those famous Tavistock House theatricals of which I will tell you something presently.

In the summer of 1846 we went to live at Lausanne in Switzerland, and my reminiscences of my father during that summer and autumn are chiefly concerned with walks along the lake-side or among the beautiful hills behind the town, of visits to open air fêtes in the heart of the green woods where he was always anxious that I should join and distinguish myself in the boyish sports that were going on, of queer rifle matches with the marksmen on one side of a valley and the targets on the opposite hill sides, of a short stay in Geneva just after a revolution—it was only a little one, but still it *was* a revolution—and even of an earthquake, also only a very little one but still an earthquake. It was a time of very hard work on Dombey and the Battle of Life, both of which were in hand at once, and of a good deal of worry and ill-health, but my father found time for many pleasant mountain excursions, to Chamonix, to the Great St Bernard, which always had a weird fascination for him, and elsewhere, and for much cheery intercourse with the many charming English families who made an unusually agreeable society round the little town. Visitors from England, too, he had in plenty. I can well remember one autumn evening in the fading twilight, my sister Mamie (May) sitting at the piano and singing the Queen of the May, and Alfred Tennyson unexpectedly strolling in among us through the window that opened on to the lawn, as if the odd coincidence were quite a matter of course.

In November another long carriage journey took the family to Paris, where we inhabited the strangest house ever furnished, I should think, and quite as "ridiculous, extraordinary, unparalleled, and preposterous," as my father described it to be. It was "something between a baby house, a shades, a haunted castle, and a mad kind of clock," he declared, "and not to be imagined by the mind of

man One room is a tent, another room is a grove, another room is a scene at the Victoria The upstairs rooms are like fanlights over street doors," he wrote to Mr Forster, to whom in a subsequent letter he described the bedrooms as being exactly like opera boxes, adding "You shall judge for yourself of this preposterous dining room The invention, Sir, of Henry Bulwer, who when he executed it (he used to live here), got frightened at what he had done, as well he might, and went away"

During the next few weeks I was conducted, nothing loth, to a good many theatres to "consolidate my French" as my grandfather once expressed it, and I am quite certain that my father found the classical French drama at the Théâtre Français almost as dull as I did, although it was not until some years later that he wrote "there is a dreary classicity at that establishment calculated to freeze the marrow"

From the preposterous house, which was a constant source of delight to my father, I went soon after Christmas to school at King's College, in London, being conveyed thither by Mr Forster in the Malle-poste, a mode of conveyance which I should like to recommend to some of the modern travellers who make the columns of the newspapers resound with their outcries if the express to Paris happens to be a quarter of an hour late From Paris my father came over to London soon afterwards on some particular matter of business, and, calling for me unexpectedly, took me out for a long tramp round Hampstead Heath and about that part of the country, and finally to Lady Blessington's at Gore House to dinner As we sat down to table there was a vacant chair next to mine "It is only the Prince," explained Lady Blessington to my father, "he is always late," and, indeed, some minutes passed before a sallow, rather sullen, heavy looking man came in, and after kissing Lady Blessington's hand and taking very little notice of the rest of the company, who, for their part, seemed content to take very little notice of him, sat down by my side The new-comer took very little part in the general conversation, but talked to me pleasantly enough for a time about my school-life, and especially about my recent stay in Paris, and then, very soon after

dinner and an interval of moody silence, took himself off This was the Prince—Prince Louis Napoleon, afterwards Emperor of the French, subsequently prisoner of Sedan and Cassel, and finally exile of Chislehurst A couple of days afterwards I was seized with a very pronounced attack of scarlet fever It was only a coincidence, no doubt, but at that time I found it very hard to persuade myself that the mysterious Prince had had no hand in bringing about the disaster

During the next two or three years there was more acting in London and the country, at one time of "Every Man in His Humour" for the benefit of Leigh Hunt, at another of the same comedy and "The Merry Wives of Windsor" for Sheridan Knowles, but of my father at this period I have little recollection, having been considerably engaged in working up those arrears of education which had accumulated alarmingly during the foreign trips But a summer in Bonchurch, in the Isle of Wight, in 1849, is always very freshly present to my mind Here, in the society of a number of friends, old and new, my father made the time pass in the liveliest manner, and, although the climate for a while did not suit him, was full of energy and go There seem to me to have been continual excursions and picnics during the day, constant impromptu dances, and games, and forfeits, and such like diversions, performances of conjuring tricks, with my father as the magician and John Leech as his attendant, in the evenings When I read David Copperfield afterwards, and came to the description of that wonderful picnic to which David and Dora went from Norwood, the memory of many pleasant days spent on Shanklin Downs and thereabouts came back to me, and I had no doubt at all about the original of Red Whisker, who obtruded himself on public notice by making a salad, and, "being an ingenious beast" constructed a wine cellar in the hollow trunk of a tree One of these Bonchurch picnics was celebrated by John Leech in a picture in Punch, which some of you may remember, under the title "awful appearance of a wops at a picnic party"

"We were very merry," my father says in many of his letters of that year, and

describes with great enjoyment at one time how, with the assistance of the village carpenter, he converted a little waterfall which tumbled out of the garden over on to the beach into a shower bath—a shower bath was always one of the necessities of life with him, and he had one at Tavistock House of such severity as to earn for itself the name of the Demon—and at another how “we have been sufficiently rollicking since I finished the number, and have had great games at rounds every afternoon with all Bonchurch looking on.” Nor was the element of mystery altogether absent. John Leech having met with an accident to his head while bathing, and remaining very ill and restless with a restlessness which nothing could relieve, my father exercised his magnetic power upon him, and very quickly sent his patient into that strange sleep into which I had often seen him throw people before. “I talked to the astounded little Mrs. Leech across him when he was asleep, as if he had been a truss of hay,” he said, describing the incident afterwards. Throughout his life my father sympathised strongly with the mesmeric investigations of his friend Dr. Elliotson, though without going with the good doctor—he was Thackeray’s Dr. Goodenough—to the extreme lengths to which his enthusiasm eventually led him, and had quite an extraordinary power in that direction himself. Indeed the mere intense gaze of those keen and luminous eyes, even without any of the passes and manipulations which form so much of the stock in trade of the ordinary mesmerist, had astonishing influence over many people, as you will read in all sorts of descriptions of him, and to my mind always seemed as if it could read one’s inmost soul. But it was seldom in later years that he used this mesmeric power. It was too serious a matter to trifle with, and “took it out” of the practitioner too much. This old mesmerism or magnetism, or whatever it may be called, of Dr. Elliotson, by the bye, a too great devotion to and belief in which ruined the doctor’s practice and lost him to a great extent his position in the medical profession, has been revived during the last few years under the name of hypnotism—another instance of the great truth that there is nothing new under the sun.

In the following year my father added

to his labours by starting the weekly periodical, the notion of which had been so long in his mind, and which under its two names “Household Words” and “All the Year Round” was to form part of the work of the rest of his life, and then came the founding of the Guild of Literature and Art, which involved a great deal of labour, much eager hope, and, unfortunately, much bitter disappointment. A considerable sum of money was got together by the performance of Lord Lytton’s comedy “Not so Bad as we Seem”, by subscriptions, and so on, but the men of letters and artists for whose benefit the houses which the Guild built at Stevenage, were intended, could not be induced either to live in them, or in other ways to give the scheme their support. I was honorary secretary of the Guild many years afterwards, and I remember well, even then, how acutely my father still felt the failure of the enterprise, although nearly twenty years had passed since it first saw the rose light of enthusiasm and hope. It was rather an artificial and forced piece of work this comedy of Lord Lytton’s, and the performance lives in my recollection mainly by reason of the farce which followed it, and which, originally written by Mark Lemon, had been so altered, and added to, and cut about, that how much of the piece, as it was actually played, was by the original author and how much represented the work which the manager had put into it, it would have been difficult for anybody to say. It was one of those theatrical absurdities in which the characters disguise themselves, and deceive other people, in a way that could not happen anywhere except in that wonderful stage land in which all things are possible, and my father played a touch-and-go barrister, a deaf sexton, a boots, an invalid, a pedestrian and cold water drinker, and an old woman, with astonishing humour and versatility, and all contrasting in the strangest way with the dashing young leader of fashion whom he had personated in the comedy.

At this time I was at Eton and, except in the holidays, saw little of my father, but he came down to entertain me and my friends from time to time, and wonderfully high jinks we had on those occasions. His account of one of these outings, contained in a letter to the Honourable Mrs. Watson of Rockingham Castle, to whom

and her husband "David Copperfield" was dedicated, is so good that, although it has already appeared in his published letters, I must ask you to allow me to quote it in this place. That there was a certain amount of humorous exaggeration about the account of the doings of that delightful day you will readily understand, but really it is not very much touched up after all, and, besides, its fun is not uninteresting as showing the ease with which he adapted himself to any society he might be in, and how admirably well he could get on even with a party of schoolboys in a thunderstorm.

They seemed to have no bodies whatever, but to be all face, their countenances lengthened to that surprising extent. When they saw us, the faces shut up as if they were upon strong springs, and their waistcoats developed themselves in the usual places. When the first hamper came out of the luggage van, I was conscious of their dancing behind the guard, when the second came out with bottles in it, they all stood wildly on one leg. We then got a couple of flies to drive to the boat-house. I put them in the first, but they couldn't sit still a moment, and were perpetually flying up and down like



PRIVATE THEATRICALS AT TAVISTOCK HOUSE

A scene from the "Frozen Deep"

"Let me tell you," he says, "that a week or two ago I took Charley and three of his schoolfellows down the river gipsying. I secured the services of Charley's god-father (an old friend of mine, and a noble fellow with boys), and went down to Slough, accompanied by two immense hampers from Fortnum and Mason, on (I believe) the wettest morning ever seen out of the tropics."

"It cleared before we got to Slough, but the boys, who had got up at four (we being due at eleven), had horrible misgivings that we might not come, in consequence of which we saw them looking into the carriages before us, all face

the toy figures in the sham snuff-boxes. In this order we went on to Tom Brown's, the tailor's where they all dressed in aquatic costume, and then to the boat house, where they all called in shrill chorus for 'Mahogany,' a gentleman so called by reason of his sunburnt complexion, a waterman by profession. He was likewise called during the day 'Hog' and 'Hogany,' and seemed to be unconscious of any proper name whatsoever. We embarked, the sun shining now, in a galley with a striped awning which I had ordered for the purpose, and, all rowing hard, went down the river. We dined in a field. What I suffered for fear those

boys should get drunk, the struggles I underwent in a contest of feeling between hospitality and prudence, must ever remain untold. I feel, even now, old with the anxiety of that tremendous hour. They were very good, however. The speech of one became thick, and his eyes too like lobsters' to be comfortable, but only temporarily. He recovered and, I suppose, outlived the salad he took. I have heard nothing to the contrary, and I imagine I should have been implicated on the inquest if there had been one. We had tea and rashers of bacon at a public house, and came home, the last five or six miles, in a prodigious thunderstorm. This was the great success of the day, which they certainly enjoyed more than anything else. The dinner had been great, and Mahogany had informed them, after a bottle of light champagne, that he never would come up the river 'with ginger company' any more. But the getting so completely wet through was the culminating part of the entertainment. You never in your life saw such objects as they were, and their perfect unconsciousness that it was at all advisable to go home and change, or that there was anything to prevent their standing at the station two mortal hours to see me, was wonderful. As to getting them to their dames with any sort of sense that they were damp, I abandoned the idea. I thought it a success when they went down the street as civilly as if they were just up and newly dressed, though they really looked as if you could have rubbed them to rags with a touch, like saturated curl-paper. I should have liked Watson of all things to have been in the Eton expedition tell him, and to have heard a song (by the bye I had forgotten that) sung in the thunderstorm, solos by Charley, chorus by the friends, describing the career of a booby who was plucked at college, every verse ending

" 'I don't care a fig what the people may think,

" 'But what will the governor say?'

which was shouted with a deferential jollity towards myself, as a governor who had that day done a creditable action and proved himself worthy of all confidence."

I will only add, by way of note to that account of the day's proceedings that I was not the young gentleman whose

speech became thick and his eyes too like lobsters'!

The years 1853 and 1854 I passed in Germany, only coming home for Christmas and consequently was never one of the party at the two houses in Boulogne in which my father took so much delight, and his life in which he describes so charmingly in a number of his letters, and in the article in "Household Words" called "Our French Watering place."

Coming home in December, 1853, I met him in Paris with Augustus Egg and Wilkie Collins, with whom he had been on a winter tour in Italy and Switzerland. This meeting he describes in one of his letters, thus: "We arrived in Paris on a Friday evening, when I found my son Charley, hot—or I should rather say cold—from Germany, with his arms and legs so grown out of his coat and trowsers, that I was ashamed of him, and was reduced to the necessity of taking him, under cover of night, to a ready-made establishment in the Palais Royal, where they put him into balloon-waisted pantaloons, and increased my confusion." Whether I wore those continuations on the homeward journey I do not remember. But I know that we all went on together, and that my father considerably astonished me at Calais—it was perfectly calm and smooth—by lying down on the deck enveloped in all the rugs and overcoats he could get hold of, becoming of the complexion of a damaged orange, and delivering himself, an absolutely unresisting prey, to sea sickness. From this unpleasant malady he suffered on the smallest provocation for many years. In one of his "Household Words" or "All the Year Round" papers he describes himself as endeavouring to console a fat Frenchman, who was gazing ruefully at the sea as the train was running along the sandy French coast country in sight of the tumbling waves, with the remark that he himself was always sea-sick when it was possible to be so. The Frenchman's retort that, for his part, *he* was always sick even when it was impossible to be so, always seemed to me to have expressed the situation more accurately. Certainly on the night to which I am now referring it did absolutely seem to be an impossibility. It is characteristic of my father that, after some years of this sort of thing, finding that his restless travels were

frequently taking him across the Channel, he decided that it would not do any longer and must be got over, and somehow—I was never quite able to understand how, or whether in the early stages of the cure any medicine or drugs were employed—it *was* got over, and he became quite a respectably good sailor, even the Atlantic on the second voyage to America, causing him but a slight amount of inconvenience.

The celebrated amateur dramatic performances at Tavistock House which in

the other a burlesque on "William Tell" by one of the Broughs, and disported ourselves therein to our hearts' content, albeit in a scratch sort of manner and with no special assistance from the authorities. In the following year, however, my father took the matter in hand, and got up a revised and expurgated version of Fielding's "Tom Thumb," in which parts were found for almost all his children and a number of their young friends besides, and which was presented with all needful



A GROUP OF PLAYERS IN THE "FROZEN DEEP"

Taken in Albert Smith's garden at Walham Green, 1857. Charles Dickens the Younger is seen on the left, between his father and Albert Smith.

their full development with the "Frozen Deep" were, I have no hesitation in saying, the most extraordinarily artistic and successful things of their kind ever known, had very modest and unassuming beginnings. We always had a large children's party on or about the sixth of January, and in the years 1852 and 1853 I and a schoolfellow of mine, since widely known as an accomplished man of letters, a brilliant lecturer, and an eloquent preacher—the Reverend Canon Ainger—got up two little plays, the one a burlesque of "Guy Fawkes" by Albert Smith, and

accessories in the way of costumes, wigs, properties, and all the rest of it. This performance was so successful, that a still more ambitious flight was essayed in the shape of Planché's *Fortunio* next year with equally satisfactory results.

In both these performances my father took part on the stage, besides, as it seems to me, doing everybody's work, and more, in the course of preparation and rehearsal. He revised and adapted the plays, selected and arranged the music, chose and altered the costumes, wrote the new incidental songs, invented all the stage business,

taught everybody his or her part, and was in fact, everywhere and everything at once. The parts that he himself played were but small ones—The Ghost of Gaffer Thumb (with a song) in the first piece, and Baron Dunover, the impecunious father of the three heroines in "Fortunio"—but in the latter piece he also appeared as the Expectant Cousin of the Nobility in General, and, with a fixed and propitiatory smile on his face which I shall never forget—the very type of the smile of the sycophant and toady—constantly pervaded the stage, whence he was better able, than from the wing, to direct the performance.

Of course it was clear that something more important must come of all this, and that something came very soon—only six months afterwards in fact—in the shape of Wilkie Collins's powerful and ingenious drama "The Lighthouse," in which my father, for the first time I think, displayed that extraordinary melodramatic intensity and force, with which his readings were afterwards to make the public so familiar. The earlier plays had had practically no assistance in the way of scenery, but now the services of no less an accomplished painter than Clarkson Stanfield were requisitioned, and, besides devising a very ingenious arrangement of the interior of the Eddystone Lighthouse, in which the action of the play took place, he painted a most striking sea-scape of the lighthouse itself in heavy weather, to serve as an act-drop. The principal parts were played by my father, this time under the name of Mr Crummles—the theatre was described in the bills, by the bye, as the smallest theatre in the world, as, no doubt, it was—Wilkie Collins, Mark Lemon, my eldest sister, and my aunt, Miss Hogarth, while minor characters brought in Augustus Egg, myself, Ainger, and some others.

At the cue "Eddystone Lighthouse" the green curtain was raised, and displayed, to the unbounded astonishment of the audience, Stanfield's picture, and the words "billows rise" were my signal—I was in charge of the storm—to let loose the elements. We had all the correct theatrical weather out in the hall, the sort of silk grindstone for the wind—Marcus Stone, now R A turned the wind if I remember rightly—the long box of rain, the flash for the lightning, the sheet

of iron for the rattle of the thunder, besides half a dozen cannon balls to roll about on the floor to simulate the shaking of the Lighthouse as it was struck by the waves—and we dropped, I recollect, various heavy articles at intervals to represent the thud and crash of the billows. It was nervous work, this riding on the whirlwind and directing the storm. It had to be done all through the first act, exactly at the word, of course, and only on each occasion, for a rigidly defined time, and I could always tell by the very look of my father's shoulders at rehearsal as he sat on the stage with his back to me that he was ready for the smallest mistake, and that if I didn't wave that flag at exactly the right moment, or if the component parts of my storm were at all backward in attending to their business, there would promptly come that fatal cry of "stop!" which pulled everything up short, and heralded a wiggling for somebody.

The following Christmas we passed in Paris, and, as far as amateur theatricals were concerned was necessarily blank, but on the sixth of January, 1857, the Tavistock House theatricals reached their climax in the production of Wilkie Collins' "Frozen Deep." This was a very ambitious effort indeed, as far beyond the "Lighthouse" as the "Lighthouse" was in advance of "Guy Fawkes" and "William Tell", and, looking back upon it all and recalling the little stage on which it all had to be done, the extraordinary perfection to which infinite ingenuity and endless pains brought it is a marvel to me to this day. The school-room at Tavistock House was a good sized room—nothing more—with a fairly large bay window, which did not however occupy the whole of one side. The "Lighthouse" being only in one scene, was played opposite this bay, in which the audience were seated, but for the "Frozen Deep" which was arranged in three acts, the bay had to be used for the stage and had, furthermore, to be supplemented by a great wooden construction erected outside the windows. This arrangement—the windows, of course, being taken out—was utilised in the most artful manner by the scene-painters, as well as by the author, who in the construction of his play kept the necessities and disqualifications of the peculiarly

shaped little stage carefully in view, and quite surprising scenic and dramatic effects were the result. The cast of characters being comparatively large, and a number of supernumeraries having to be on the stage in the scene of the hut in the Arctic Regions in the second act with a good deal of stage business to get through too, a prodigious amount of rehearsal was imperatively necessary. I think we pegged away at the "Frozen Deep" for quite three months, three and sometimes four times a week—indeed for those who were engaged in the farces as well as the play, life, when it came to December, seemed to be one long rehearsal. But if we had to work hard we had plenty of fun, and the enjoyment of the rehearsal-night suppers would have made amends for even harder work than we had. You will form some idea of the number of people who were continually in the house—company, carpenters, scene-painters' assistants, and the rest—and of the unceasing hospitality of the manager, when I tell you that the butcher called in person on my mother one day, to point out that he was supplying such an abnormal quantity of joints that he thought it his duty to mention it to her, in order to be sure that there was no mistake. As to what sort of condition the house was, to live in, all this time, some extracts from my father's letters describing the state of things, will give you a pretty good notion—

"You will be surprised by the look of the place," he wrote to Mr Forster. "It is no more like a schoolroom than it is like the sign of the Salutation Inn at Ambleside in Westmoreland. The sounds in the house remind me, as to the present time, of Chatham Dockyard—as to a remote epoch of the building of Noah's Ark. Joiners are never out of the house, and the carpenters appear to be unsettled (or settled) for life. All day long, a labourer heats size over the fire in a great crucible. We eat it, drink it, breathe it, and smell it. Seventy paintpots (which came in a van), adorn the stage, and thereon may be beheld Stanny, and three Dansons, all painting at once. Meanwhile, Telbin, in a secluded bower in Brewer Street, Golden Square, plies his part of the little undertaking." Of his own particular occupations at this time he wrote to Macready: "You may faintly

imagine, my venerable friend, the occupation of these also gray hairs, between 'Golden Marys,' 'Little Dorrits,' and 'Household Wordses,' four stage carpenters entirely boarding on the premises, a carpenters' shop erected in the back garden, size always boiling over on all the lower fires, Stanfield perpetually elevated on planks and splashing himself from head to foot, Telbin requiring impossibilities of smart gasmen, and a legion of prowling nondescripts for ever slinking in and out. Calm amidst the wreck, your aged friend glides away on the 'Dorrit' stream, forgetting the uproar for a stretch of hours, refreshes himself with a ten or twelve miles' walk, pitches headforemost into foaming rehearsals, placidly emerges for editorial purposes, smokes over buckets of distemper with Mr Stanfield aforesaid again calmly floats upon the 'Dorrit' waters." It was a good deal of work for one man to get through, certainly.

The outcome of the seventy paint pots, the size, and the distemper, was that Mr Telbin, with the assistance of Messrs Danson, painted a charming drawing room scene with a beautiful sunset effect for the first act, while Stanfield, "Stanny" for short, arranged for the second act the hut in the Arctic regions, with a fine view of the ice-field on a backcloth out on the scaffolding in the garden, and for the third a cave on the coast of Newfoundland, where all the characters met, by a rather remarkable series of coincidences, with another admirable backcloth showing the sea and a man-of-war at anchor. The prologue was again written by my father, and delivered by Mr Forster, who used to prowl about the stage with baleful looks when the time for beginning drew near, and "mouthed his hollow aes and oes" quite in the most approved Macready fashion.

In some respects my father's performance in this piece even surpassed that in the Lighthouse, and in one particular scene I remember his realism was positively alarming—not to say painful. In his demented condition in the last act he had to rush off the stage, and I and three or four others had to try and stop him. He gave us fair notice, early in the rehearsals, that he meant fighting in earnest in that particular scene, and we very soon found out that the warning



was not an idle one. He went at it after a while with such a will that we really did have to fight, like prize-fighters, and as for me, being the leader of the attacking party and bearing the first brunt of the fray, I was tossed in all directions and had been black and blue two or three times before the first night of the performance arrived. The 6th of January, 1857, as I have said, saw the production of the play and it was at the subsequent supper of the performers and some of the guests that Lord Campbell declared that he would rather have written *Pickwick* than be Lord Chief Justice of England and a Peer of Parliament. I can very well remember the amused twinkle of the eye and the queer smile with which my father, who knew his man well, received this piece of transparent humbug. Two or three times more we played the "Frozen Deep" at home to audiences of ninety or so, who were got into the theatre somehow, and then the stage was dismantled, never to be restored. Afterwards we played the piece for the Jerrold fund—now at the Gallery of Illustration, now at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester where our little fit-up looked not much bigger than a Punch and Judy show, but where the play went quite as well as it had ever done in the Tavistock House schoolroom. Also we had the honour of giving a private performance at the Gallery of Illustration before her Majesty the Queen and the Prince Consort, and I can well recall the excitement which was caused among the younger members of the company by the presence of the Princess Royal and the Crown Prince of Prussia, then just engaged to be married. Of the difficulty that stood in the way of my father's paying his respects to Her Majesty that night in response to her expressed desire, he wrote "My gracious sovereign was so pleased that she sent round begging me to go and see her, and accept her thanks. I replied that I was in my farce dress, and must beg to be excused. Whereupon she sent again, saying that the dress 'could not be so ridiculous as that,' and repeating the request. I sent my duty in reply, but again hoped her Majesty would have the kindness to excuse my presenting myself in a costume and appearance that were not my own." This excuse commended itself to Her Majesty's invariable tact and consideration, and my father

carried his point, and it was thirteen years before the Queen had an opportunity of thanking him personally for the evening's entertainment.

It was in 1856 that my father bought the house called Gadshill Place, near Rochester, which had been one of the principal objects of his childish admiration and ambition, and to which he thus returned after many years of work and fame—far removed from the very queer small boy—as he described himself to be—who had been told that if he were to be very persevering, and were to work hard, he might come to live in it or in some other such house, and who, not unnaturally, looked upon such an idea as an absurdity. It was on a Friday that he signed the cheque for the purchase money, as it was on a Friday that so many important events in his life quite accidentally came about, and gave him one more of his few superstitions—the superstition that Friday was, in some strange way, peculiarly *his* day. The house was bought as much as an investment as with any idea of a continuous occupation of it, and the cost of necessary alterations was, as usual in such cases, estimated originally at a very modest sum, which was, also as usual, very considerably exceeded in a short time. But he soon fell in love with the place, and found in the very extensive improvements which he carried out up to the very last year of his life just the interest which the rather unsettled years which were to come seemed to require. It was only on the Sunday before his death, fourteen years afterwards, that he showed his younger daughter the new conservatory then just finished, and said, as a joke against himself, "Well, Katey, now you see positively the last improvement at Gadshill," but there can be little doubt that, had he lived, he would still have found something else to do about the place.

It was on a bright March day that I went down with my father to see the new purchase—Mark Lemon and Wilkie Collins were of the party, if I remember rightly—and that we took our first walk up the chalky, hilly lane from Higham station which was afterwards to be so familiar to us. We inspected the premises as well as we could from the outside—my father, full of pride at his new position as a Kentish freeholder, and making all

manner of jokes at his own expense, would not take us into the house for fear of disturbing the Rector and his daughter who were then inhabiting it—and we lunched at the Falstaff Inn opposite, and walked to Gravesend to dinner, full of delightful anticipation of the country life to come. It was not until the next year that that Gadshill life, of which so many people have preserved so many pleasant memories, began, and it was not until 1860 that my father finally gave up his house in London and made Gadshill his head-quarters. Life at Gadshill very nearly ended as soon as it began, I remember, for my father one night, having

finished with a dish of toasted cheese, as to which latter dish it is a fact that when my mother in the old Tavistock House days published, under the name of Lady Clutterbuck, a book of her own daily bills of fare, the critics with one accord agreed that the little work was well enough, but that no man could possibly survive the consumption of such frequent toasted cheese.

In fact, my father's customs as to hours of work and exercise remained practically the same wherever he was, and during all the years he passed at Gadshill it is not too much to say that he never took at all to what most people understand by a



THE BACK OF GADSHILL, SHOWING THE CONSERVATORY

burglars on his mind, aroused me stealthily and for the next hour or so we went dodging each other behind trees and in and out of shrubberies, so burning to distinguish ourselves with the shot gun and the revolver with which we were respectively armed, that to this day I cannot in the least understand why we did not shoot ourselves or, at all events each other.

His personal habits underwent little change in this alteration of his life, however. Whatever his politics may have been, he was conservative enough in his own arrangements. I wonder, for instance, for how many years his breakfast consisted of a rasher of broiled ham, how many dinners were begun with a glass of Chichester milk-punch, how many were

country life. In the morning immediately after breakfast, at Gadshill as at Tavistock House, he spent some time in having a general look round the house to see that all was in order, with the difference that at Gadshill there were the stables, the dogs, and the garden, as well as the furniture, the pictures, and the books to be taken stock of. Then would follow the morning's work, during which he was on no pretext to be disturbed by any one whatever, and then after lunch came one of those long walks which used to try the mettle of ambitious but inexperienced visitors so considerably.

These walks, of which there is an endless variety in that part of the country—round about the beautiful woods of Cobham, through Rochester and over Blue Bell

hill with its fine views and its Druidical remains to Maidstone, along the high road between Rochester and Gravesend, with its bright glimpses of the river and the never-ending procession of vessels upward and downward, and, still more interesting to my father, perhaps, the wonderful army of tramps which oscillates perpetually between Chatham and Woolwich, over the marshes by Higham or by Cooling, where Pip and Joe Gargery lived, and many more up hill and down dale—were his chief delight, but although his keen observation took in every minutest detail of the scenes through which he passed and of every fluttering rag of every tramp he met, he never acquired, or cared, I think, to acquire, the accurate knowledge of country sights and sounds, the intimate friendship, so to speak, with nature, which comes not always to him who is country-bred and but very, very rarely to the town-bred man who takes at middle age to the woods and fields. There is, you see, a vast difference between a country life and merely living in the country.

It was the same with the gardens, which he always insisted upon having bright and full of colour, as well as well-kept, neat, and orderly, but in which he took none of an expert's individual interest, with the dogs which he appreciated as companions without having any of the sportsman's knowledge or care for breed or points, with the stables, which were only of interest as containing the modest animals which were kept to draw, as they might have drawn in London, the brougham, the basket carriage, or that Irish car which somebody presented to him and which we sometimes had the greatest difficulty in steering through the narrow lanes thereabouts. That he loved Gadshill is true, and that he succeeded in making himself and many other people very happy there, is equally beyond doubt. But I think part of its enjoyment to him was due to the fact that it was very near those streets of London which always had so strong a hold on his imagination, and that while he had as long as he wanted in the restful quiet and the free, fresh air of the country, he had the comfortable quarters of the 'All the Year Round Office' to turn to whenever he felt the necessity of the streets, and the numbers of people in them, to supply the singular

stimulus they afforded him. Writing years before from Lausanne he had said of these streets and figures that they supplied something to his brain which he could not afford, when busy, to lose, and that the toil and labour of writing day after day without that magic lantern was immense. Throughout all his career it was the same. The eager, restless life of the great city was a real necessity to him.

As to his system of work, it was the same wherever he was. No city clerk was ever more methodical or orderly than he, no humdrum, monotonous, conventional task could ever have been discharged with more punctuality or with more business-like regularity, than he gave to the work of his imagination and fancy. At something before ten he would sit down—every day with very, very rare exceptions—to his desk which, as to its papers, its writing materials, and the quaint little bronze figures which he delighted in having before him, was as neat and as orderly as everything else in and about the house, and would there remain until lunch time—sometimes, if he were much engrossed with any particular point or had something in hand which he was very anxious to finish there and then, until later. Whether he could get on satisfactorily with the work in hand mattered nothing. He had no faith in the waiting-for-inspiration theory, nor did he fall into the opposite error of forcing himself willy-nilly to turn out so much manuscript every day, as was Mr. Anthony Trollope's plan, for instance. It was his business to sit at his desk during just those particular hours in the day, my father used to say, and, whether the day turned out well or ill, there he sat accordingly. And, very often, I have known a day to have been barren of copy, but to have been a very good day, notwithstanding. Often while I have been in his room while he was at work—as happened not infrequently in the later years of his life—I have seen that he had scarcely written a line, and have heard him report at lunch time that he had had a bad morning, but have known from the expressive working of his face and from a certain intent look that I learnt to know well, that he had been, almost unconsciously, diligently thinking all round his subject, and that the next day's work would result in the

comparatively easy production of a goodly number of those wonderful sheets full of blue lines, and erasures, and "balloonings out," and interlineations, and all kinds of traps for compositors, which you may see at South Kensington.

When he was writing one of his long stories and had become deeply interested in the working-out of his plot and the evolution of his characters, he lived, I am sure, two lives, one with us and one with his fictitious people, and I am equally certain that the children of his brain were much more real to him at times than we were. I have, often and often, heard him complain that he could *not* get the people of his imagination to do what he wanted, and that they would insist on working out their histories in *their* way and not *his*. I can very well remember his describing their flocking round his table in the quiet hours of a summer morning when he was—an unusual circumstance with him—at work very early, each one of them claiming and demanding instant personal attention. And at such times he would often fall to consider the matter in hand even during his walks. There was no mistaking the silence into which he fell on such occasions. It was not the silence only of a pause in conversation, but the silence of engrossing thought, not, one felt, to be broken or interrupted lightly. Many a mile have I walked with him thus—he striding along with his regular four-miles-an-hour swing, his eyes looking straight before him, his lips slightly working, as they generally did when he sat thinking and writing, almost unconscious of companionship, and keeping half a pace or so ahead. When he had worked out what had come into his mind he would drop back again into line—again, I am sure, almost unconsciously—and the conversation would be resumed, as if there had been no appreciable break or interval at all. How real some of his characters were to him you cannot fail to see when you read of the suffering, the absolute mental and physical suffering, which he went through at the time of the death of Little Nell, and remember that he walked about the streets of Paris inconsolable all night after he had killed Paul Dombey. And is there not absolute unmistakable reality about his description of the conception of Doctor Marigold?

"Tired with *Our Mutual*," he wrote, "I

sat down to cast about for an idea, with a depressing notion that I was, for the moment, over-worked. Suddenly the little character that you will see, and all belonging to it, came flashing up in the most cheerful manner, and I had to look on and leisurely describe it." Doctor Marigold was a real live personage to his creator, that day and for many days, you may be sure.

But you must not suppose that it was all work at Gadshill, or all twelve-mile walks. The house was very snug and cosy in the winter, and the gardens and shrubberies were admirably adapted for idling and loafing in the summer, so that lazy visitors could go their own way in perfect peace, while there was, out of working hours, the brightest and most genial of hosts to keep things going merrily. Music, billiards—he had put a small billiard table into the room which had originally been his study, moving his books and his writing table after leaving Tavistock House into the front room, which so many of you know by Mr Fildes' picture "*The Empty Chair*"—impromptu charades, the drawing-room games in which he took so much delight, the brightest conversation, all these passed the time cheerfully and quickly, and, when the house was full, as it generally was, there was always a very lively time. Of the earnestness and energy with which my father threw himself into everything that came in his way I have already spoken, and it will be enough therefore merely to say that he really did play at these drawing-room games—Spanish merchant, *How, when, and where*, *Yes and no*, immortalised in the Christmas Carol, and a special memory game which was really hard work by reason of the extreme attention and care which it required—as if his life depended on his success. And I remember him very well in an absurd charade playing a ridiculous sailor who was brought up before a magistrate and could not be restrained from dashing out of the dock, and dancing a preposterous hornpipe on the floor of the court, with as much humorous detail as if he had had days of rehearsal to work it up instead of comparatively few minutes. You were not expected, if you were a visitor unused to the ways of the house, to join, unless you liked, in these games, which, as they were

played, really called for a good deal of brain-work, any more than you were expected to join the party of walkers on a twelve or fourteen mile spin, but those who did join in them were expected to do their best. Indifference or listlessness, in small things or in great, my father could never endure.

In the summer there were often excursions and picnics, and it is noticeable, both as an instance of my father's orderly and tidy habits, as well as of his constant consideration and thoughtfulness for other people, that it was made a point of honour that no remains of the feast—no bottles, or broken meats, or paper—should be left behind to disfigure the scene, or to give possible inconvenience to other later visitors. It always seems to me that it would be a good thing, in these days of universal outings, if the public generally would see its way to following this excellent example.

There being an eight-acre meadow at the back of the house and plenty of young men and boys about the neighbourhood we were not long in establishing a cricket club, and in arranging matches with the adjacent villages. In these contests my father always took intense delight, although, as will be obvious to all students of the singular proceedings connected with the famous match in which All Muggleton encountered Dingley Dell, his practical acquaintance with the game was decidedly of a very limited kind. In one of the early matches he officiated as umpire, and, I remember, astonished the natives exceedingly by calling "play" before each ball of the first over, conceiving no doubt, that his duty required him so to do. It was not long before he discovered that there was something wrong, and, although he gave no sign of having noticed anything, I do not think that he ever officiated as umpire again, except under circumstances of special pressure. Such active part as he afterwards took in the cricket was, as a rule, confined to scoring, sometimes to the intense embarrassment of the scorer who had been brought by the other side, who generally passed, before the day was far advanced, into a state of respectful giggling. My friend Mr. William Hughes, of Birmingham, in his "Tramp about Dickens Land," tells a cricket-field anecdote of my father in which he describes him as umpiring and

scoring at the same time, a combination I do not remember having met with. Gifts of prize bats and balls were not infrequent and were valued by the recipients, I am sure, not so much for themselves as for the kindly words of praise and encouragement which accompanied them. On such occasions it was always a source of wonder and delight to me to see how quickly my father got at the keynote of a young man's character and seemed to know by instinct exactly what to say to him and exactly how to say it. In the mid-day dinners and in the modest evening festivities at the Falstaff over the way, which used to wind up the day, he was always much interested although I do not remember his ever having been present. But I have often known him walk up and down the road outside, smoking his cigar and listening to the songs and speeches, with any visitor who might be staying at Gadshill and whom he wished to impress with the improvement which the course of years had brought about in the conduct of such matters. Notably I remember on one occasion the glee with which he called the special attention of Charles Fechter, the distinguished French actor, to a Kentish sentiment which dated very far back in the old war times but was always immensely popular and received with acclamation as a brilliantly new and original idea, and which ran—"When the French come over may we meet them at Dover."

From a very early period of his career the idea of reading his books aloud was very familiar to my father, and as far back as the year 1844 he read the "Chimes" to a specially distinguished audience of men of letters and artists in Mr. Forster's room at Lincoln's Inn Fields, running over from Genoa for the purpose. Readings of the portion of the book which might at the time be in progress we often had at home, and it was only two years after the "Chimes" reading that, writing from Lausanne to Mr. Forster, he said "I was thinking the other day that in these days of lecturings and readings a great deal of money might be made (if it were not *infra dig*) by one's having Readings of one's own books. It would be an odd thing. I think it would take immensely. What do you think?" Mr. Forster did not encourage the idea, and it remained for some time in abeyance,

but at Christmas, 1853, my father gave three readings for the benefit of the Midland Institute in the Birmingham Town Hall to tremendous audiences, and so many other applications for aid of a similar kind were made to him from other parts of the country that it soon became evident that there would be little chance for Mr Forster's advice, against the determined set of my father's inclinations towards the platform. But, if Mr Forster could not altogether put a stop to the project, he could delay it considerably,

of which the British Bar had never known?

Time will not admit of my dwelling at any length on the history of the Readings, which would almost afford materials for a separate lecture of itself, and it is only in respect to their bearing on the premature close of my father's life that I will touch upon them, even briefly, now. For, unfortunately, they did have a distinct bearing upon the end, and must be said to have hastened it even if they did not actually bring it about. It was not



DICKENS READING "THE CHIMES" AT FORSTER'S HOUSE IN LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS

From the original sketch by Daniel MacLise, R A, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum

and it was not until the 29th of April, 1858, at St Martin's Hall in London, now no longer in existence, that the first professional appearance as a reader was made. Shall I ever forget how my father at one of the early St Martin's Hall readings, gave Serjeant Buzfuz's speech straight at Lord Chief Justice Campbell, who happened to be seated in the middle of the front row and who took the joke with admirable gravity? or how several of the learned counsel who were present, themselves very open to the charge of Buzfuzism, afterwards pronounced the Serjeant to be an exaggeration, the like

only that the work was hard—I have known readers and lecturers who have worked much harder, in so far as mere travelling and number of public appearances are concerned—but there was something of almost wilful exaggeration, of a defiance of any possible over-fatigue either of mind or body, in the feverish sort of energy with which these Readings were entered upon and carried out. And that they went on long after unmistakable physical signs had given the clearest warnings of serious danger ahead, everybody knows quite well.

The first two series, those of 1858-1859

and 1861-1863, did no particular harm, though indications of overwork were not wanting from time to time even then—not altogether surprising when we remember that, besides the Readings, there were editorial duties to be attended to and books to be written as well. But in the early part of 1865 my father had a somewhat severe attack of illness, and was afflicted from that time to his death with a lameness in the left foot brought about by some form of inflammation which occasionally caused him acute suffering, and which persistence in excessive walking exercise greatly aggravated. The actual cause of this painful malady was somewhat of a puzzle to the doctors. Sir Henry Thompson put it down to gout. Another eminent authority, Mr. Syme, of Edinburgh, said it was nothing of the kind. All that they did agree upon was that perfect rest was necessary, and perfect rest was just the very thing that could not be got, and in the June of this year my father was in the terrible railway accident at Staplehurst, when, although he escaped actual injury, he received such a shock to the nervous system as he never quite got over. I went down to Gadshill when I saw the news in the paper next morning and found him greatly shaken, though making as light of it as possible—how greatly shaken I was able to perceive from his continually repeated injunctions to me by and bye, as I was driving him in the basket carriage, to “go slower, Charley,” until we came to foot-pace, and it was still “go slower, Charley.”

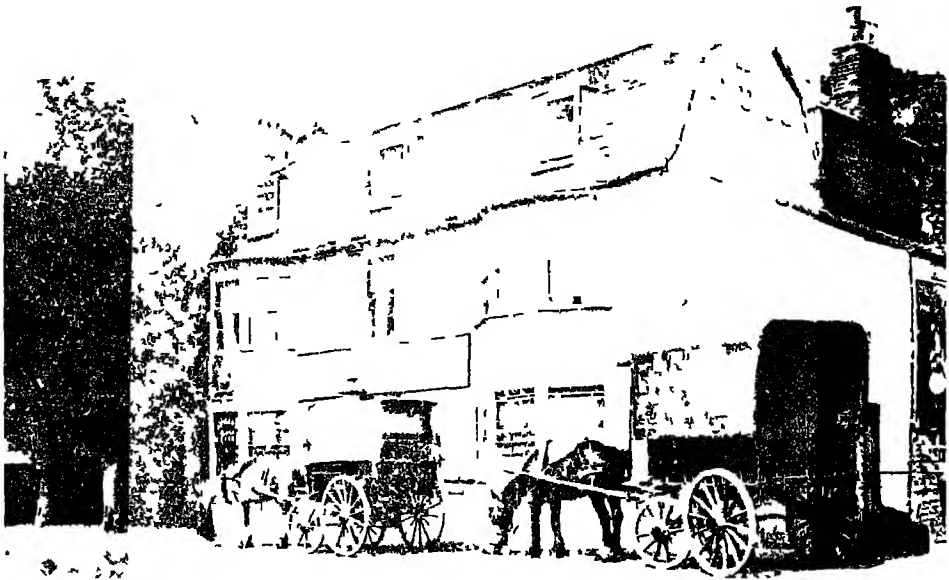
For some months he suffered considerably at intervals. There was a perceptible drag about the left foot, the pulse denoted some ailment of the heart, and he was in fact really ill—so ill that he even recognised the fact himself. In January, 1866, he wrote: “For some time I have been unwell. I have noticed for some time a decided change in my buoyancy and hopefulness—in other words in my usual tone.” All this pointed to the absolute necessity of rest, but the very next sentence in the letter I have just quoted ran: “so I have accepted an offer to read for thirty nights in England, Ireland, Scotland, or Paris,” and so the round of hard work, under circumstances more than ever difficult and unfavourable, began again. So the season of 1866-1867 was got through, not

without great effort and considerable suffering, and in the autumn of 1867 he went on his second visit to America, where, notwithstanding almost continual illness and frequent recurrences of the trouble in the foot, aggravated by over-walking in the snow, he travelled and read all through a very severe and trying winter.

Soon after his return I joined my father as private secretary and sub-editor of “All the Year Round,” and almost my very first experience of work with him was connected with the new reading which he now had strongly in his mind—that of the Sikes and Nancy murder. We were alone together at Gadshill, I remember, and I was sitting with doors and windows open one bright, clear, still, warm autumn day, in the library, engaged upon a mass of papers as to which I had to report to him later in the day. Where he was I did not know, but, supposing him to be in the Swiss chalet over in the shrubbery across the road, took advantage of having the place to myself and went steadily on with my work. Presently I heard a noise as if a tremendous row were going on outside, and as if two people were engaged in a violent altercation or quarrel, which threatened serious results to somebody. Ours being a country constantly infested with tramps, I looked upon the disturbance at first as merely one of the usual domestic incidents of tramp life arising out of some nomadic gentleman beating his wife up our lane as was quite the common custom, and gave it hardly a moment’s attention. Presently the noise came again, and yet again, worse than before, until I thought it really necessary to ascertain what was going on. Stepping out of the door on to the lawn at the back I soon discovered the cause of the disturbance. There, at the other end of the meadow, was my father, striding up and down, gesticulating wildly, and, in the character of Mr. Sikes, murdering Nancy with every circumstance of the most aggravated brutality. After dinner I told him what I had seen, and he read me the murder—it was rather a startler for an audience of one—and asked me what I thought about it. “The finest thing I have ever heard,” was my verdict, “but don’t do it.” If there was one thing more than another that my father resented it was any suggestion from anybody else that his health was failing, or

that he was undertaking anything beyond his strength, so, when I was pressed for reasons I would give none, and merely stuck to my point without explanation or argument. Mr Forster had also objections to urge—he had, as he tells us, a strong dislike to the proposal, less, perhaps on the ground which ought to have been insisted upon, of the excessive physical exertion it would involve, than because such a subject seemed to be "out of the province of reading," and it was finally resolved that, before the murder

said to me as I came up to where he was receiving the enthusiastic congratulations of such good judges of dramatic effect as Madame Celeste and Mrs Keeley "It is finer even than I expected," I answered, "but I still say, don't do it." As he looked at me with a puzzled expression in his eyes Mr Edmund Yates came up to us "What do you think of this, Edmund?" my father said, "here is Charley saying it is the finest thing he ever heard, but persists in telling me, without giving any reason, not to do it." Mr Yates,



THE SIR JOHN FALSTAFF, GADSHILL

was incorporated in a public programme, there should be a private trial performance of it at St James's Hall.

Well, the trial performance was given before a very representative and critical audience, whose verdict, unfortunately, confirmed my father in his opinion of the effect the reading would produce upon the public, and the moment he spoke to me—eager, triumphant, excited—at the little supper on the platform which brought the proceedings to a cheery end, I knew that no advice or expostulation of mine would avail. "Well, Charley, and what do you think of it now?" he

an intimate friend and a keen observer, knew more than most of the people who were gathered about us, and, with one quick look at me, said gravely, and to my father's intense amazement, "I agree with Charley, Sir."

And, indeed, the situation was grave enough to any one who would look at it impartially. He had altered materially of late. There was no doubt the American work had told upon him severely. The trouble in the foot was greatly intensified, and he was gravely out of health. Among other serious symptoms he noticed that he could only read the halves of the



letters over the shop-doors on his right. The old elasticity was impaired, the old unflagging vigour often faltered. One night at the St James's Hall, I remember, he found it impossible to say *Pickwick*, and called him *Picksnick*, and *Picnic*, and *Peckwicks* and all sorts of names except the right with a comical glance of surprise at the occupants of the front seats which were always reserved for his family and friends. But although his lifelong friend and medical attendant Mr Carr Beard looked very grave at this danger signal, he himself treated it lightly enough, and, if he attributed it to any special cause at all, referred it, as he referred the disordered vision I have mentioned, to the effects of the medicine he was taking.

Everything pointed to the desirability of his giving up the more trying part of his work—at the very least to the absolute necessity of not adding to it in any way. But his mind was made up. The new series of Readings must be carried through, and Sikes and Nancy must be put into the programme as often as possible. You will see, if you will read Mr George Dolby's excellent book "*Charles Dickens as I Knew Him*," how intolerant he became of any suggestion that the work that he had undertaken was too hard or that the number of murders should at any rate be curtailed, and what tremendous effort, followed by what pitiable exhaustion, this particular reading cost him. But nothing could stop him, until nature stepped in and brought the series of readings to an abrupt close towards the end of April, 1869, by the development of symptoms the significance of which Dr Thomas Watson, who was specially consulted, and Mr Beard, refused to ignore. In fact when my father described himself, in a letter written to Mr Dolby on the very eve of the breakdown, as being, "a little out of sorts," he was on the brink of an attack of paralysis of the left side and probably of apoplexy.

The enforced rest brought about some improvement, and during the rest of the year he pursued his usual editorial business, in the course of which I was with him constantly, and also worked at Edwin Drood with no very apparent strain, and really seemed on the road to a much better state of health. But there was yet to be a farewell series of twelve readings

at St James's Hall, and I have no sort of doubt whatever that these completed the work which the murder had practically begun, and, if his death can be attributed to any one thing, killed him. "I have had some steps put up against the side of the platform, Charley," said Mr Beard, who was constantly in attendance. "You must be there every night, and if you see your father falter in the least, you must run up and catch him and bring him off with me, or, by Heaven, he'll die before them all." What I felt during those readings, and when I saw the exhausted state of the reader in his dressing-room afterwards, I need not tell you. But strangely enough, I remember very well that on the very last night of all, the 15th of March, 1870, I thought I had never heard him read the Christmas Carol and The Trial from *Pickwick* so well and with so little effort, and almost felt inclined to hope that things had not been really so serious as the doctors had supposed.

Well ladies and gentlemen, you know how soon the end came. On that mournful time you will not, I am sure, wish me to dwell. I will only tell you of the last time I was with him before he lay dying in the dining room at Gadshill—an interview which is curiously illustrative of that reality to him of his ideal world of which I spoke to you some little while ago. He was in town for our usual Thursday meeting on the business of "*All the Year Round*," and, instead of returning to Gadshill on that day had remained over night, and was at work again in his room in Wellington Street, on the Friday, the 3rd of June. During the morning I had hardly seen him except to take his instructions about some work I had to do, and at about one o'clock—I had arranged to go into the country for the afternoon—I cleared up my table and prepared to leave. The door of communication between our rooms was open, as usual, and, as I came towards him, I saw that he was writing very earnestly. After a moment I said, "If you don't want anything more, sir, I shall be off now," but he continued his writing with the same intensity as before, and gave no sign of being aware of my presence. Again I spoke—louder, perhaps, this time—and he rested his head and looked at me long and fixedly. But I soon found that, although his eyes

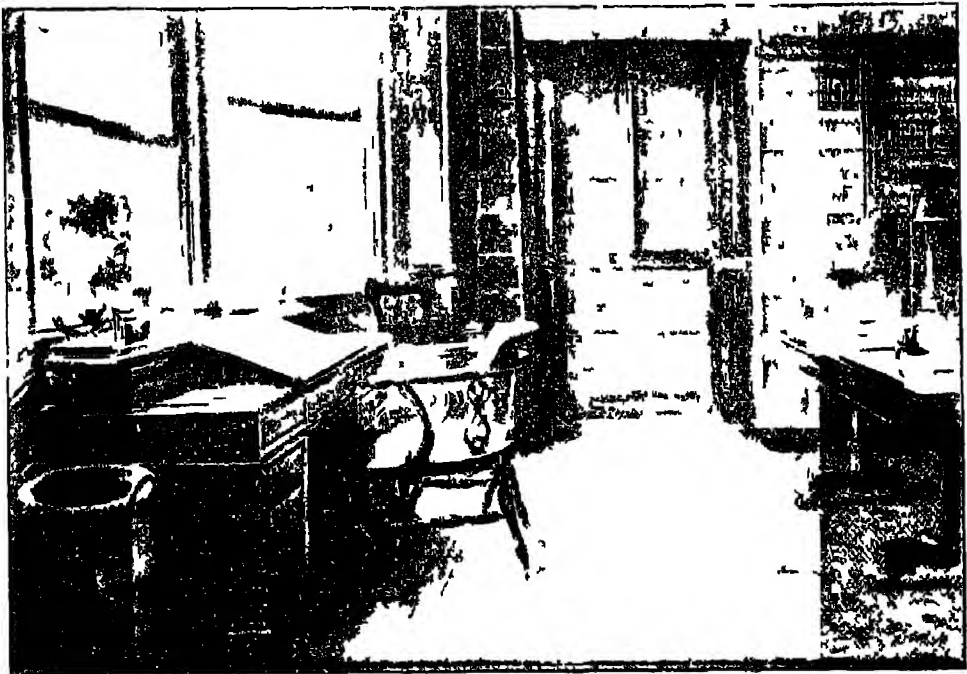
were bent upon me and he seemed to be looking at me earnestly, he did not see me, and that he was, in fact, unconscious for the moment of my very existence. He was in Dreamland, with Edwin Drood, and I left him—for the last time.

It was but a few days after that, as you know, that we laid him to his rest in the grey old Abbey, with the garden plots all around appropriately ablaze in the warm June air with the scarlet flowers he loved so well, and I think that we all felt, even then, in the first bitterness of our loss, that the end, although it had come all too soon for us, had come to him as he himself would have wished it to come.

"Much better to die, doing," he had said thirteen or fourteen years before, and

again, "I have always felt of myself that I must, please God, die in harness. How strange it is to be never at rest, and never satisfied, and ever trying after something that is never reached, and to be always laden with plot and plan and care and worry, how clear it is that it must be, and that one is driven by an irresistible might until the journey is worked out! It is much better to go on and fret, than to stop and fret. As to repose—for some men there's no such thing in this life."

But, ladies and gentlemen, for the most restless, and most dissatisfied, and most disappointed among us all the journey will be worked out in God's good time, and to each of us, in our several degrees and at the appointed hour, repose and peace must assuredly come—at last.



THE EMPTY CHAIR, GADSHILL, 9th JUNE, 1870

From the painting by the late Sir Luke Fildes, R.A.



GADSHILL



DICKENS HOUSE AT BROADSTAIRS

Usually identified with the famous Dover donkey fights of Miss Betsy Trotwood

*The above and, with a few exceptions, other photographs in this Supplement are reproduced, by permission, from the collection of Mr T W Tyrrell*

